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ABSTRACT

A survey asked newspaper editors how they assess job candidates, particularly whether they use skills testing. A stratified random sample of editors at 350 American daily newspapers was divided into four categories based on circulation. Completed questionnaires were obtained from 154 respondents (44% response rate). Results indicated that over 55% of the editors give skill tests and that about one-fourth of the editors use job try-outs. Findings suggest that this trend toward testing will continue and that journalism educators should make sure that students gain exposure to both the skills they will be tested for and the testing process. (Eight tables of data and 16 notes are included.) (RS)

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NEWSPAPER DIVISION

SKILLS TESTING AT AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

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(Paper accepted for presentation to the Newspaper Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication at the annual convention in Washington, D.C., August 1989.)

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NEWSPAPER DIVISION

ABSTRACT

SKILLS TESTING AT AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

Discussions with professional editors have indicated that they are looking for better ways of assessing job candidates than clips, interviews and references. The literature suggests that there is an increasing trend toward skills testing to provide a more objective measure of a candidate's potential. The literature, however, scarcely addresses other questions, such as what papers use job tryouts, how papers handle job tryouts, effects of various variables on the likelihood of testing, effects of various variables on the likelihood of holding tryouts or reasons why some newspapers do not test.

This paper reports the results of a survey of a stratified random sample of American newspaper editors in four circulation categories, asking them how they assess job candidates. The major findings are that, in keeping with previous studies, the trend toward testing and job tryouts continues with more than 55 percent of responding editors reporting that they give skills tests. About one-fourth of respondents said they use tryouts, sometimes in combination with tests. Results also are presented regarding why newspapers began testing, what they test for, what they look for in candidate, how they handle tryouts and, if they don't test, why not.

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The paper reports the results of a survey of a stratified random sample of American newspaper editors in four circulation categories, asking them how they assess job candidates. The major findings are that, in keeping with previous studies, the trend toward testing and job tryouts continues. Results also are presented regarding why newspapers began testing, what they test for, what they look for in a job candidate, how they handle tryouts and, if they don't test, why not.

SKILLS TESTING AT AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

While newspaper editors across the country would like to think themselves good judges of character, many say they are uneasy with hiring practices and have turned to more extensive evaluations of potential hires throughout the newspaper office.

Some say that checking references isn't providing a well-balanced look at the hires, pointing to the reluctance on the part of former employers to give out information. Others said they would not give anything more than name, rank and serial number in a phone call or written inquiry, but may reveal more in an informal setting, perhaps at a newspaper organization meeting, such as the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) or the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE). Others told Newsom and Ingham that too much of the information they are given about prospective employees is false or inappropriate at best.[1]

At the core of a continuing discussion in the profession is whether to rely on tests as a success quotient. Whether skills testing or aptitude or motivational, the "assessment instruments" seem to raise concerns whenever discussed.[2]

Editors also seem to know that other groups are testing, but are unsure where to turn for help if their paper wants to try out a test - skills or otherwise.[3]

Research and articles in trade journals over the past 10 years[4] have shown a trend evolving at newspapers, generally in the under 100,000 circulation market, toward beefing up applicant reviews, with many managers in charge of hiring adding skills testing and tryouts as a way to reinforce more traditional evaluation methods of references, clips and interviews.

In a 1980 study published in 1982 by Ron Smith that included only 41

respondents, papers reported little uniformity in the in-house testing procedures used, but about 34 percent of the respondents (14) used short-term tryouts and written tests. Another 34 percent used written tests but no tryouts and still another 5 percent (2 editors) used a tryout alone.[5]

Another study done in 1986 and published by Louis Gwin in 1988, after this study was developed, showed that about 45 percent of the editors responding gave some type of writing and editing test to reporters. This was much lower than the 1980 study by Smith, but closer to a 1987 report of the SNPA that showed 51 percent of the 169 responding papers administering some type of writing/editing tests to job candidates. Although the SNPA study cited by Gwin didn't differentiate among newsroom positions, it did show a prevalence highest among newspapers in the middle circulation category of 25,000 to 50,000.[6]

To some extent, this survey's results updates Smith's nine-year old and Gwin's three-year-old data to establish whether the trend toward testing is continuing, but there are a number of areas that have been added to the base of this study. The survey seeks to establish whether some factors affect the testing/non-testing question, including number of recent hires, salaries offered and whether the newsroom is unionized. It also asks more extensive questions about tryout set-ups, about why some papers don't test, about what prompted other papers to begin skills testing and about the year papers began testing candidates.

The move toward skills testing may grow out of editors' concerns that journalism educators aren't doing their jobs and that at least entry-level applicants lack basic skills.[7] That potential failing can be hidden by the efficient work of a copy editor on the story's final form. An interviewer, therefore, would never detect that the prospective employee couldn't spell or punctuate appropriately and yet grammar is one of the areas cited as important by editors.[8]

It would appear from research, too, that managers are again testing because they are losing the fear they initially had that the 1964 Civil Rights Act might find the skills tests discriminatory. Newsom's October 1986 article reiterates that the "Civil Rights Act does not prohibit the use of tests in the selection of employees." And, the article detailed the major newspaper groups that use skills testing as part of a raft of "assessment instruments." In particular, it cited the Knight-Ridder group and the Associated Press. AP has given editorial applicants a writing and editing test for more than 20 years. AP has held that the timed test that involves writing a variety of stories is "directly job-related" and therefore meets any federal or state laws or regulations concerning testing.[9]

What also may be affecting editors' and managers' decisions to include testing among their evaluation tools is an increased awareness of finances at publications. If an editor has to fire an employee after a short period of time, he probably will need permission from the corporation to fill the position. And if he gets permission, he will lose time and money seeking out yet another hire, checking out references and interviewing.[10]

Statement of Problem/ Research Questions

This study started after a discussion of the frustrations of a mid-level editor at a 100,000 circulation paper who was tired of getting candidates the managing editor felt reasonably sure were good. Sometimes they were and, of course, sometimes they turned out to have weak language or reporting skills. But the managing editor, too, was frustrated. How was she to know what the person sitting in the chair in her office was truly like? Clips and references could be doctored. An applicant could be a good interviewer - and likewise give an excellent candidate interview, giving all the appropriate answers. A few months later, the truth would emerge. A copy desk person or the metro editor would have

to spend hours going over the raw copy to make it passable, putting the editor on the line to make a decision whether to keep the new hire or fire him, starting the tedious hiring process again. They felt there had to be a better way to hire into the newsroom.

But before plunging into testing, the editor wanted to know whether other editors found it helpful. And so, in January 1988, a pretest was developed to administer to two seminar groups attending the American Press Institute in Reston, Virginia.[11]

Results included editors who told horror stories about hires they should have tested and ways their hiring process failed them. Others bragged about the confidence they gained by testing. And still others said they'd rather rely on their gut instincts as to whether the applicant would "fit in." A main thread throughout their responses was that even if they test, most wanted more information.

This study seeks to establish whether there is a continuing trend toward testing at American newspapers and to pinpoint what editors value most in the hiring process. It seeks to point out what arrangements are most common among those papers with tryouts, whether papers with tryouts test and whether tryouts become more important as the papers' circulations increase. Among the non-testing newspapers, the study tries to narrow editors' reasons for not testing and what they relied upon instead. Among papers that do test, the purpose was to find out not only why they test, but to find out what types of skills are tested, in the hope of spurring educators to take note that graduates have to be ready to take these kinds of tests. Schools perhaps should consider giving at least a basic writing skills test frequently during a news sequence student's academic career, so the student could remedy problem areas and overcome some fears of test-taking. Some students may perform well when given a set of facts and told to write a story, having been drilled on proper news story form. The same group, however, could freeze if asked to translate those skills into word

problems that include grammar, punctuation and spelling errors.

Methodology

In late January 1988 a pretest was drawn and a small sample (35) identified through two American Press Institute seminars to find out whether newspapers employ tests as a evaluation tool in the hiring process. The study was given in February and results showed a high level of interest and a need for slight changes in questions and the addition of a request for test samples.

This study is based on data gathered from a stratified sample of 350 American dailies. The 1,657 dailies listed in the 1988 Editor and Publisher Yearbook were placed into four strata based on circulation size: under 25,000, 25,000-50,000, 50,001 to 100,000 and over 100,000. A random sample was drawn, with the number sampled from each circulation size category proportionate to the actual number of dailies in the population in each category.[12]

Initial questionnaires and a cover letter, along with a pre-paid mailer were sent to the selected newspapers to the managing editor or editor most likely to do the hiring. A follow-up letter was sent. And, a third letter with a copy of the questionnaire also was mailed.

The study drew 154 respondents out of the 350, for a 44 percent response rate. While the authors hoped for a better response rate, it was felt that three mailings was sufficient to draw out the self-selected responses.

The questionnaire asked all editors how many new hires into reporting positions were recorded in the past year and if that was more, less or about the same as the previous year, hoping to show whether high turnover affects tools used in hiring. It asked for the average annual pay for reporters at entry level and at three and five years. It also asked whether the reporters were covered by a union contract, possibly indicating less control over the hiring process.

It asked all editors - testing or non-testing - to rank traits they valued

when looking for an entry-level reporter (reliability as evidenced by references; personality traits; basic reporting skills; basic language skills; clarity of writing). It asked all editors for anecdotal comment on problems in the hiring process of entry-level reporters. Editors also were asked to rank what types of background they like to see in candidates (journalism background, but no degree in any field; experienced workers, but not in media; journalism school degree; English degree; liberal arts degree), hoping to see if that could make a difference in whether they test or not.

And finally in the main section, all editors were asked to rank certain evaluative tools such as clips, interviews, skills tests, references and tryouts.

If editors used tryouts, they were asked to describe the travel and payment arrangements and the length of the tryout (one to two days; three days; three days to one week or more than a week.) Editors also were asked to describe their expectations of a tryout.

Editors who don't test were asked whether they have considered testing and whether they once tested and then discontinued testing. An open-ended section asked them if they had a hire they regretted and what action was taken or what the editor would have done differently before hiring the person. Editors of papers that don't test were asked about their attitude toward testing in two questions.

The testing paper section asked which employees are tested, when the tests began and what skills were included (grammar, punctuation, spelling, writing exercise skills, reporting skills, coping skills and "other"). It reviewed the role the test plays in hiring and how it was developed as well as the factors that prompted the group to begin testing. Open-ended sections again asked about hires that didn't work out and attitudes about testing.

Results and Discussion

The 154 responding papers ranged in circulation size from 1,370 to over 765,000. The mean circulation size was 37,860. The median was 20,572. When broken down according to the Editor and Publisher Yearbook circulation categories used to formulate the strata for our sample,[13] 54 percent of the respondents were under 25,000 (as compared with 69 percent in E&P's population), 27 percent were between 25,000 and 50,000 (as compared with 16 percent in E&P), 12 percent were between 50,001 and 100,000 (as compared with 8 percent in E&P) and 7 percent were over 100,000 (as compared with 7 percent in E&P). So our response was under-representative of the smallest papers and somewhat over-representative of the medium-sized papers. Given that response to a mailed survey involves considerable self-selection, the low response rate and the under- and over-representation of three of the four circulation size categories must be viewed as signs of possible bias in the response. It is possible that only paper with a greater interest in testing and tryouts (those that use these assessment tools or are interested in beginning to use them) responded. It is possible that the survey population actually uses assessment tools less than this study appears to indicate. Still, the study provides a current assessment of job assessment tools in the newspaper industry that should be useful to those who are interested in the issue of skills testing and job tryouts.

Nine percent of the respondents had made no new hires in the past year. The average number of new hires was 3.9 and the median number was three. The most frequent reply was two. Seventy-one percent of the papers had hired between one and five new people in the past year. Thirteen percent reported hiring between six and nine, and seven percent reported hiring 10 or more.

The average salary for between zero and five years experience was $17,428, the median salary was $16,750. Salaries ranged from $10,543 to $34,333. For the purposes of analysis, salary was broken into quartiles.

Roughly 12 percent of respondents reported that their reporters were covered by union contracts. The other 88 percent, of course, were non-union.

Skills Testing

Eighty-six papers, or 55.8 percent of respondents, reported that they test job applicants. This is higher than Gwin's figure of 45 percent and closer to, but still higher than, the SNPA figure of of 51 percent.[14] Given that Gwin's data are now almost three years old, and the SNPA data are almost two years old, this figure suggests that there may indeed be a growing trend toward more skills testing at U.S. dailies. On the other hand, it is also that our higher figure is indicative of the sample bias discussed earlier.

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Insert Table 1 About Here

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Table 1 shows that this trend is particularly evident among newspapers in the 25,000 to 100,000 circulation range (similar to the SNPA findings cited by Gwin), and especially so in the 50,001 to 100,000 circulation range. Smaller papers and the largest papers are significantly less likely to report that they test job candidates. It is interesting that there is a clear positive relationship between testing and circulation size until 100,000, and then testing drops off. Although there is not a statistically significant relationship between circulation size and the likelihood of a job tryout, the papers in the largest circulation category reported using tryouts more than did papers in any other category. Thus these large, and generally wealthy papers may be less likely to use a skills test because they can afford a more extensive, and expensive, tryout. Another possibility, however, is that larger papers simply do not need to test as much because they are hiring proven professionals from other papers rather than beginners who are just out of school.

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Insert Table 2 About Here

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Not surprisingly, there also was a statistically significant relationship between the likelihood of testing and salary, broken into quartiles (see Table 2). Basically, what this table shows is that those papers paying the very lowest salaries do very little testing, while the majority of papers in the other three salary quartiles do test.

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Insert Table 3 About Here

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Table 3 shows a significant relationship between holding a job tryout and administering a skills test. To some extent, this contradicts the hypothesis postulated regarding Table 1 -- that larger papers don't test skills because they are able to hold tryouts. But Table 3 may not entirely contradict that idea. The tryouts held at larger papers may be more extensive and revealing than those held by smaller papers. At any rate, Table 3 appears to suggest that there may be a trend toward finding out as much as possible about a job candidate before hiring the person, although, again it is possible that our sample over-represents papers with an interest or a stake in job assessment tools.

The likelihood of testing did not vary significantly when crosstabulated with the number of new hires, number of new hires while controlling for circulation size, or union vs. non-union contract.

Of those who reported testing, almost 78 percent said they test all reporting candidates, regardless of level of experience (the rest test only entry-level candidates). Almost 85 percent reported that they test all copy editing candidates, regardless of level of experience.

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Insert Table 4 About Here

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Only 24 percent of responding newspapers reported that they began skills testing prior to 1980. An additional 36 percent began testing prior to 1985 and the rest began testing since 1985. Again, this appears to indicate a trend. Table 4 shows a crosstabulation of year testing began, broken down into two categories, and circulation size. Again, the relationship is positive and significant, although it should be noted that, because there are only four responding papers with circulations over 100,000 that test, more than 20 percent of the cells in the table have an expected frequency of less than five. Papers in the 50,001 to 100,000 circulation range are the most likely to have begun testing prior to 1980. As papers get smaller, they appear to have begun testing more recently. Interestingly, there also is a drop-off from the second-largest to the largest circulation category. But, we have already demonstrated that the largest papers are less likely to test than are papers in the second largest category. Perhaps the largest papers have used tryouts longer, and have begun to test candidates more recently as an additional evaluation tool. Papers in the largest circulation category still appear to be significantly more likely to have begun testing prior to 1980 than do the papers in the two smallest categories. Again, this seems to reflect the role of a newspaper's resources (they could afford to develop the tests) and the effects of papers with the most to lose (that is, paying the highest salaries), having the greatest desire to carefully screen applicants. After larger papers developed tests and demonstrated their effectiveness, smaller papers naturally began to follow the trend. In fact, when we asked how the tests were developed, 38 percent of responding papers said they developed the tests themselves and 48 percent said they

borrowed the tests from other newspapers. The rest were developed by consultants (five percent) or provided by the newspaper's company (10 percent).

Fifty-nine percent of respondents said testing plays a major role in the hiring process, while 35 percent said it plays only an advisory role. This held, regardless of circulation size.

When we asked what the papers test for, we got the following responses: 92 percent of those who test want to learn about the grammar skills of candidates, 88 percent test for punctuation skill, 95 percent test for spelling ability, 77 percent test for writing skills, 37 percent test for reporting skills and 24 percent test for coping skills. So, while there does appear to be a trend toward skills testing, it still seems to be fairly basic. It is more difficult, and presumably more expensive and time-consuming, to test for reporting skills and for coping skills, and fewer papers reported doing so. The great majority of respondents to this survey who test appear to use fairly simple, pencil-and-paper tests for basic skills.

We also asked respondents to indicate why they began testing. The reasons, in rank order, were as follows: 52 percent did so out of concern about language skills of new hires, 50 percent because of spelling skills of new hires, 42 percent because of reporting skills of new hires and 23 percent because they found that "glowing references faded quickly." This rank order held when controlling for circulation size. It is interesting that only 17 percent of respondents said that testing revealed that candidates were more proficient than expected. Seventy-six percent reported that testing revealed that candidates were less proficient than expected and the rest (6 percent) said the results of testing were about what they expected.

Tryouts

Of those papers that responded, 26 percent reported using tryouts. Table 3 showed that those who use tryouts were more likely to test than those who do

not. The use of tryouts did not vary significantly when controlling for circulation size, the number of new hires, union vs. non-union or salary quartiles.

Most papers (70 percent) reported that tryouts last one or two days. Eight percent reported holding three-day tryouts, 13 percent reported holding tryouts that last up to one week and 10 percent reported holding tryouts that last more than one week.

Over 33 percent of papers that hold tryouts reported that they pay for a candidate's travel. Over 53 percent reported that they pay for a candidate's living expenses during the tryout. Over 68 percent pay some sort of salary to a candidate for the period of the tryout. Of those paying a salary, about 64 percent pay a standard amount to all candidates, four percent pay commensurate with the candidate's experience and the rest make other salary arrangements.

Non-testing Newspapers

Of the papers that reported that they did not test, a great majority, 73.8 percent, reported that they are considering instituting a skills test. This too appears to reflect a general trend in the direction of more testing. Interestingly, however, 27 percent reported that they had tested at one time but discontinued the practice.

Those who do not test were asked to rank a set of possible reasons why not. The number one reason was that they felt that managers' instincts are a better guide (overall mean rank=1.59 on a ranking scale of 1 to 4). The second-rated reason was that they felt that testing determines ability only for a single day (mean rank=2.03). The distant, third-rated reason was that they feared the legal implications of testing (mean rank=3.48). So there appears to be some support here for Newsom's contention that papers are losing their fear that the 1964 Civil Rights Act would find skills test discriminatory.[15] Finally, the lowest-rated reason for not testing was philosophical opposition to the practice

(mean rank=3.62). These rankings held when controlling for circulation size.

What Papers are Looking for and How They Rate Their Own Assessment Tools

We asked respondents to rank a set of potential candidate traits according to degree of desirability. The highest ranked trait was writing ability, clarity and accuracy (mean rank on a scale of 1 to 5 = 2.08). Second was basic reporting skills (mean rank=2.15). Third was basic language skills -- the mechanical aspects of writing (mean rank=2.78). Fourth was the personality of a good interviewer (mean rank=3.58) and last was reliability as evidenced by references (mean rank=3.60). These rankings held, regardless of circulation size. It is interesting that so little faith is placed in references, particularly in light of the fact that Table 7 shows that papers with over 50,000 circulation report relying on references more than on skills tests or tryouts. The last-place ranking of good references here is indicative of the editors' frustrations mentioned in the Statement of the Problem section of this paper. It is relatively easy for a candidate to get good references. But how does a paper evaluate the people used as references (unless the paper has first-hand knowledge)? Also, perhaps because of growing legal concerns about putting negative and potentially defamatory comments in writing, references are rarely any worse than lukewarm ("Damned by faint praise?").

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Insert Tables 5 and 6 About Here

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When asked to rank a set of possible candidate backgrounds in order of preference, the respondents' answers varied by circulation size, as reflected in Table 5. All circulation sizes ranked a journalism degree highest and experienced worker, not necessarily in journalism, lowest. After a journalism

degree, the very smallest and the very largest papers reported wanting journalism experience, not necessarily with a degree. This seemed baffling at first, but after some reflection it seemed somewhat more reasonable. The smallest papers cannot necessarily afford to pay what an individual with degree in hand can make elsewhere, so they may depend on employees with experience in other small newspaper settings who do not have degrees. The largest papers can afford to take a chance on those without degrees, as long as the candidates have considerable newspaper experience. Thus, the experience sought differs at the extremes of circulation. Mid-sized papers ranked journalism experience, not necessarily with a degree, second to last. They can't afford those with a large amount of experience, but they can afford those with a degree in hand. They do not find themselves in a position where they have to look for people with small newspaper experience but no degree. Regardless of circulation size, Liberal Arts degrees (history, political science) were ranked higher than English degrees. Table 6 reports the Kendall's Tau rank-order correlations for the rankings reported in Table 5. Tests of significance were not performed because the number of items ranked (five) was too low (such tests generally require lists of about 10 items if the tests are to be considered valid).[16]

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Insert Tables 7 and 8 About Here

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Table 7 shows that rankings of the relative merits of of various assessment tools also varied by circulation size. All newspapers, regardless of size, ranked candidate interviews first and reviews of clips second. Skills tests were ranked third in the two smallest circulation categories, but dropped to fourth and then fifth in the two largest categories. The last-place ranking of skills tests by the largest papers probably reflects the fact that these papers

do not seem to be using such tests as much as smaller papers. It is interesting, however, that skills tests were ranked so low by papers in the 50,001 to 100,000 circulation size -- the very papers that report using skills tests the most and having used them the longest. This may not reflect discontentment with testing, however. Perhaps these papers' experience with testing has shown them that it is not a panacea for avoiding problem hires, but simply another assessment tool. Smaller papers may be more sanguine about using skills tests because they have begun using them more recently and have less experience with hires who have been through that process. All papers ranked tryouts lower than tests, except for papers in the largest circulation category. Again, this may indicate that those papers have greater resources for more extensive tryouts and thus put more faith in tryouts than in pencil-and-paper tests. Also interesting here is that the smallest two categories ranked references fairly low, while the two largest circulation categories ranked them third. Perhaps bigger papers, because they are dealing with a higher caliber of candidate, have a higher caliber of reference. To some extent, a person giving a reference puts his or her own reputation on the line, especially when providing a reference to a larger, better-known paper. References may be more careful and more exact when provided to larger papers. They also may be more likely to come from people known to the editors of the papers. Table 8 shows the Kendall's Tau rank-order correlations for the information in Table 7.

Conclusion

The major findings of this study are that the trend toward testing identified by SNPA, Gwin and Smith continues and that many papers also are adopting tryouts of anywhere from one day to over a week. Given the evidence that papers appear to be using any means available to assess candidates, it seems likely that we will see tests become more sophisticated - going beyond the basic pencil-and-paper mechanical skills test. Even papers not now testing have expressed an interest in developing tests as evidenced by the fact that the majority of respondents asked to see copies of tests if available.

The study results suggest that journalism educators should look within their own curricula to make sure students gain exposure to not only the skills they will be tested for in the industry, but the process of testing as well. The data also suggest that academicians trained in measurement could make their services available to newspapers or trade associations that may be interested in developing effective assessment tools.

The study also suggests that there are variety of industry-acceptable ways of objectively assessing job candidates. Editors at medium- and small-sized dailies need to take time away from the actual hiring process to evaluate the effectiveness of their hiring standards. Industry or academic associations also could provide a valuable resource if they would organize a clearinghouse for skills tests and other assessment tools, providing easier and more affordable access.

Endnotes

(1) Clark Newsom and Mark Ingham, "Checking References," presstime, (December 1985), pp. 22-3.

(2) Clark Newsom, "Job Testing," presstime, (October, 1986), pp. 38-40.

(3) The managing editor of the ASNE BULLETIN Elise Burroughs discussed this problem with us in March, 1988 after reviewing a pre-test report on this study.

(4) Ron Smith, "Employment Screening Procedures: Tests and Tryouts," Newspaper Research Journal, 3:27-31 (January, 1982). Also Louis Gwin, "Prospective Reporters Face Writing/Editing Tests At Many Dailies," Newspaper Research Journal, 9:101-111 (Winter, 1988). See also Richard J. Warren, "Even with screening, tests, the interview is °most important'," ASNE BULLETIN, (September 1984), p. 16-17.

(5) Smith, "Employment Screening Procedures: Tests and Tryouts," op. cit., pp. 27-31.

(6) Gwin, "Prospective Reporters Face Writing/Editing Tests At Many Dailies," op. cit., pp. 101-111. For anecdotal information, see also, Clark Newsom, "Job Testing," presstime, (October 1986), pp. 38-40.

(7) See Gwin, who cites Smith in "Employment Screening Procedures: Tests and Tryouts," Newspaper Research Journal, (Winter, 1982).

(8) Michael B. Shelly, "Editors agree: students must learn grammar and econ," Journalism Educator, Vol. 40, Number 3 (Autumn 1985); "The Bulletin Board: ASNE urges tests on spelling, grammar and writing for j-grads," ASNE BULLETIN (July/August 1986).

(9) Newsom, "Job Testing," op. cit.p. 38, 39.

(10) Newsom and Ingham, "Checking references," op. cit., p. 23.

(11)Pre-test of editors attending American Press Institute included those attending a seminar for papers of circulation between 15,000 - 74,000 and those attending a management seminar. The management group included an editor from the paper involved in initial research. Each self-selected seminar attendant was given two studies - one for those using tests and one for those papers that did not test. They were instructed to choose the appropriate study and return in the included pre-paid mailer. Respondents were asked to check off which types of skills were tested (grammar, punctuation, etc.) and to note why they started testing, among other questions.

(12) Editor and Publisher International Yearbook 1988, The Editor and Publisher Company, New York, 1988. The circulation sizes matched those listed in Editor and Publisher Yearbook and are commonly used in the industry.

(13) Editor and Publisher, ibid.

(14) Gwin, op. cit.

(15) Newsom, op. cit.

(16) Robert L. Winkle and William L. Hays, Statistics: Probability, Inference, and Decision (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), see especially pp. 871-874.

TABLE 1

LIKELIHOOD OF SKILLS TESTING BY CIRCULATION SIZE

	Circulation Size			
Skills Test	Under 25,000	25,000 to 50,000	50,001 to 100,000	Over 100,000
No	52.4%	32.5%	22.2%	54.5%
(n)	(43)	(13)	(4)	(6)
Yes	47.6	67.5	77.8	45.5
	(39)	(27)	(14)	(5)

Chi Square with 3 degrees of freedom=8.485, p=.037

TABLE 2

LIKELIHOOD OF SKILLS TESTING BY SALARY QUARTILES

	Salary Quartiles			
Skills Test	$10,500 to $14,349	$14,350 to $16,799	$16,800 to $19,999	$20,000 to $34,333
No	66.7%	30.3%	40.5%	32.4%
(n)	(26)	(10)	(15)	(11)
Yes	33.3	69.7	59.5	67.6
	(13)	(23)	(22)	(23)

Chi Square with 3 degrees of freedom=12.714, p=.005

TABLE 3

LIKELIHOOD OF SKILLS TESTING BY JOB TRYOUT

	Tryout	
Skills Test	No	Yes
No	50.0%	27.5%
(n)	(57)	(11)
Yes	50.0	72.5
	(57)	(29)

Chi Square with 1 degree of freedom=6.079, p=.014

TABLE 4

WHEN TESTING BEGAN BY CIRCULATION SIZE

	Circulation Size			
When Began	Under 25,000	25,000 to 50,000	50,001 to 100,000	Over 100,000
Before 1980	2.8%	24.0%	69.2%	50.0%
(n)	(1)	(6)	(9)	(2)
Since 1980	97.2	76.0	30.8	50.0
	(35)	(19)	(4)	(2)

Chi Square with 3 degrees of freedom=25.602, p=.0001

TABLE 5

RANK ORDER OF PREFERRED BACKGROUND BY CIRCULATION SIZE

	Circulation Size			
Rank	Under 25,000	25,001 to 50,000	50,001 to 100,000	Over 100,000
1	Journalism Degree	Journalism Degree	Journalism Degree	Journalism Degree
2	Journalism Experience/ No Degree	Liberal Arts Degree	Liberal Arts Degree	Journalism Experience/ No Degree
3	Liberal Arts Degree	English Degree	English Degree	Liberal Arts Degree
4	English Degree	Journalism Experience/ No Degree	Journalism Experience/ No Degree	English Degree
5	Experienced Worker	Experienced Worker	Experienced Worker	Experienced Worker

TABLE 6

KENDALL'S TAU RANK-ORDER CORRELATIONS FOR PREFERRED BACKGROUND BY CIRCULATION SIZE

	Circulation Size		
	Under 25,000	25,000 to 50,000	50,001 to 100,000
25,000 to 50,000	.60		
50,001 to 100,000	.60	1.00	
Over 100,000	1.00	.60	.60

TABLE 7

RANK ORDER OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS BY CIRCULATION SIZE

	Circulation Size			
Rank	Under 25,000	25,001 to 50,000	50,001 to 100,000	Over 100,000
1	Candidate Interview	Candidate Interview	Candidate Interview	Candidate Interview
2	Review of Clips	Review of Clips	Review of Clips	Review of Clips
3	Skills Test	Skills Test	References	References
4	References	Tryout	Skills Test	Tryout
5	Tryout	References	Tryout	Skills Test

TABLE 8

KENDALL'S TAU RANK-ORDER CORRELATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT TOOLS BY CIRCULATION SIZE

	Circulation Size		
	Under 25,000	25,000 to 50,000	50,001 to 100,000
25,000 to 50,000	.80		
50,001 to 100,000	.80	.60	
Over 100,000	.60	.40	.80